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FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2263

UNCLAS VIENTIANE 000569

SIPDIS

FOR STATE ISN/CTR AND PM/ISO/PMAT (24/7)

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KNNP](#) [MNUC](#) [PARM](#) [KCRM](#) [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [LA](#)
SUBJECT: RADIOACTIVE SMUGGLING INCIDENT AT VIENTIANE, LAOS

REF: STATE 162091

¶1. Post wishes to alert the Department and Washington agencies per reftel that it has received a report indicating a potential incident of illicit trafficking in nuclear and/or radiological materials. This report came to the Embassy's attention via a phone call from the Australian owner of a local unexploded ordnance (UXO) company. Information concerning this report was relayed telephonically to PMAT at 1105 on October 22, 2008.

¶2. Details of the incident follow:

- A) Current location of the material: Reportedly in the backyard of a Lao gentleman who claims he found the item in an airplane crash site in the southern Lao province of Saravan.
- B) Transport status of the material: Buried in the backyard awaiting a buyer. Not secure. The host government has not yet been informed. Barring other guidance, we plan to inform friend of the owner to tell his friend to turn the item over to the Lao government. We will also inform the Lao Government.
- C) Assessment of the likelihood that the appropriate authorities can/will secure the material: The government of Laos (GOL) will likely pursue the material if informed of the importance of removing it from circulation.
- D) If in transit, means of transport: Reportedly moved from Saravan to Vientiane via bus. Now stationary.
- E) Intended destination of material: Unknown. Owner reportedly trying to sell.
- F) Routing of material, if via multiple ports: N/A
- G) Supplier and/or origination point of material: Unknown, possibly American.
- H) Type of material: Carries the inscription "Caution - Radioactive Material (line break) Uranium - High Salvage Value (line break) HT7231-1" Reportedly about 9 kilos. See picture sent to PMAT.
- I) Date and time of incident: Received photos October 22 at ¶1000.
- J) Source of the report: Received the photos from Mr. Thammavong Phiphatsely, who works for Phoenix Clearance Limited and is the friend of the alleged owner. We were put in touch with Mr. Thammavong by his boss, Mr. Michael Hayes, who saw the photos and contacted us.
- K) N/A
- L) N/A
- M) Specific place where alarm or incident occurred: Item reportedly found in Saravan, Laos, and then moved to Vientiane (the capital).
- N) Additional details: According to a member of the Joint POW-MIA Detachment Three staff, the item appears to be depleted uranium, which has been used to make counterbalance weights in some types of civil and military aircraft.

¶3. Action officer at post for handling the incident is Joshua Archibald, reachable in the office at (856-21)-26-27156 or on his mobile at (856-20)-551-1740 and email archibaldjc@state.gov.
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